



Chiquitta Barr, who is enrolled in the Maternity Group Home Program, with her daughter, Alyssa.

Maternity Group Home a Haven for Young Mothers

Chiquitta Barr was only 19 when she learned she was pregnant. Barr was living with her grandmother, working two jobs and attending Union County College in Cranford, New Jersey. Her grandmother, also her guardian, promised to stick by her and even take care of the baby, but Chiquitta's life was thrown into chaos when the woman suddenly fell ill.

Chiquitta's grandmother passed away in January of 2008, three months after Chiquitta gave birth to a baby girl, Alyssa. For the first time in her life, Chiquitta found herself without a home.

"I would go from my sister's house to my cousin's house. I was all over the place," she recalled.

One day, she heard about a new program for young mothers run by Harmony House, New Community Corporation's 102-unit transitional housing facility for homeless families. The Maternity Group Home program was started in September 2008 to serve females between the ages of 16 and 21 who are either pregnant or already parenting. For Chiquitta, not having to worry about where she and Alyssa were going to sleep at night was definitely a load off her mind. The program also aided her in applying for food stamps

and other federal assistance for her and Alyssa.

"The program took a lot of stress off me because it gave me a roof over my head, three meals a day, as well as counseling and support from staff. Whenever there is an issue, it's always taken care of," said Chiquitta, who has resided in a one-bedroom apartment with her now 21-month old daughter, Alyssa, since she started with the Maternity Group Home Program last September.

In addition to on-site child care, the Maternity Group Home Program also provides 24-hour staff supervision and a set of pretty strict rules by which the young women must live. Besides group activities, the residents also receive counseling, emotional support and lots of nurturing. They also must attend individual case management meetings or therapy, in addition to parenting and life skills classes.

Chiquitta is now studying to become a medical assistant. She credits the Maternity Group Home Program for helping restore a sense of stability to her life.

"If I hadn't been here, God only knows where I would be," she said. "Not only has it been good for me, but it's a stable environment for my daughter."

SOCIAL JUSTICE

"When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?"

— Eleanor Roosevelt

"The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place."

— Marian Wright Edelman

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

— Audre Lorde

"Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe."

— Frederick Douglass

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Nursing Student Perseveres And Finishes Course



Ilduara Ramirez, shown here in a class at NCC's Workforce Development Center, where she was studying for her state board exam to become a licensed practical nurse.

When a nursing cap was ceremoniously placed on the head of Ilduara Ramirez during the traditional pinning and capping ceremony sponsored by NCC's School of Practical Nursing, it marked the culmination of a long and arduous journey.

For the 61-year-old Elizabeth resident and breast cancer survivor, having her studies interrupted by the discovery of another possible cancer site—this time in her stomach—was enough to throw her life into a tailspin.

"I was very upset because they had to do a biopsy. I couldn't concentrate or study while I was waiting for the test results," she said.

Thankfully, the results showed no sign of cancer in her stomach, allowing her to complete her Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) studies with New Community Corporation.

But it was a struggle, she admits, especially during the period when she didn't know whether cancer would strike again.

"There were many times I thought I would give up," she said.

Ramirez, a native of Colombia, South America, has been working as a nursing assistant at Trinitas Hospital in Elizabeth for nearly 30 years. She was recently looking forward to taking her state board exam, which would allow her to professionally elevate her status to that of an LPN if she passes. The title will also mean that Ramirez's income will rise, as LPN's can make \$22.00 an hour and more.

The New Community School of Practical Nursing, which started in 2002, saw its largest group ever this spring—a total of 70 combined day and evening students—complete the rigorous program that prepares them to become LPN's.

"Some worked full time jobs and still came to school. They've had some really rough times," said Ellen Boddie, the school's director and lead instructor.



Social Investment

Despite the economic downturn in the economy, New Community Corporation remains focused on continuing to serve ----

- Children in day care, pre-school, elementary and after-school programs
- Senior residents who need services such as home health, wellness care and meals-on-wheels
- Unemployed who need job skills and life skills to survive
- The housing needs of low income residents
- NCC Family Service clients enrolled in marriage and family therapy to address issues such as domestic violence. (this service helps hundreds who are in crisis throughout the year)

Please continue to help us meet these continuing pressing needs of the community we serve.

New Community Families Benefit from Food Bank Delivery



As the economic downturn has made it more difficult for families to make ends meet, New Community Corporation has attempted to lend a helping hand. Working through the office of Newark Central Ward Councilman Charles Bell, New Community has hosted several deliveries from the Community FoodBank of New Jersey.

Boxes filled with items like tomatoes and other assorted vegetables, cereals, rice, pasta, onions and po-

tatoes arrive in a truck at NCC Social Services and are distributed to families residing in NCC properties such as Commons Family, Gardens Family, Manor Family, Homes Court and New Community Estates. Seniors from two NCC buildings – Gardens Senior and Commons Family & Senior, were also recipients of the recent food drop.

The families eagerly arrived at the NCC Social Services office with bags, boxes and carts to help carry away their supplies.

"It was very nice. I got bread, tomatoes, pasta, fresh parsley and quite a few bags of items like cookies," said Dorothy Garmony, who lives in Manor Family with her three grandchildren. "Everything was nice and fresh."

Malcolm Hayman, a social worker in New Community's Social Service Department, said he has seen quite a spike in the number of families seeking food assistance, especially around the end of the month when their money starts to run low.

"Our residents are suffering the hardship of the economic downturn. Many have lost their jobs or their hours have been cut," said Leslie Leonor, director of Social and Senior Health Care Services. "In partnering with our local community food bank and Councilman Bell, we here at New Community Social Services feel that it is part of our mission to help and serve those in our community. We may not be solving the entire problem, but we are helping to mend the wall, one crack at a time."

NCC On The Move

- New Community Corporation recently closed on Roseville Commons, a **new 50-unit low and moderate income housing development**. The project is a partnership with RPM Development Group, one of New Jersey's leading private developers of affordable housing.
- **Homes Court**, NCC's oldest housing development, featuring an outdated open courtyard design, **will be demolished to make way for new affordable housing built with today's city dwellers in mind**. The demolition will be carried out with financial assistance from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.
- A new affiliation with the **Visiting Nurse Association of Central New Jersey** will see hospice services being offered by NCC for the very first time. The association, the state's largest, voluntary, non-profit visiting nurse association, is taking over operations of NCC's Essex Valley Visiting Nurse Association. Essex Valley has already started to expand services, having established Wellness clinics staffed by a nurse practitioner in two of NCC's senior residences.
- Despite the weak economy, NCC is making key, strategic hiring decisions in critical service delivery areas. **A new director of the Workforce Development Center who brings more than three decades of experience to the position started on July 1, 2009.**
- **An assistant administrator has been hired for NCC's Extended Care Center**, with plans underway to expand into the sub-acute area. Additional physicians are also being recruited to help boost referrals to the 180-bed center and adjoining Adult Medical Day Care Program.

Joseph Matara Chief Operating Officer



snow,” Matara recalled, saying he started college classes that same morning.

He would end up graduating with an accounting degree from New Jersey City University (formerly Jersey City State College) and later earning an MBA in Information Systems from St. John’s University in Queens.

Growing up as one of ten children in the Kenyan town of Kisii, New Community Corporation’s Joseph Matara recalls that times were tough. Both his parents worked as laborers on a tea plantation, but their vision for their children extended far beyond the fields.

“There was a lot of love at home and our parents really emphasized education,” said Matara, 43, the middle child, who today holds the position of NCC’s Chief Operating Officer.

A true beneficiary of the ancient African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child,” Matara said it was the financial support from fellow Kenyans that enabled him to travel to New Jersey in 1987, joining two older brothers.

“I opened the door and all I saw was white snow and it was cold. That was the first time I ever saw

After working several years in the finance field, first at a chemical company and then at Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, where he was controller, Matara joined New Community Corporation in 1998, immediately being put in charge of the purse strings. He ultimately rose through the ranks until he was tapped two years ago by CEO Msgr. William J. Linder for the newly created position of Chief Operating Officer.

“I’ve learned a lot working with Monsignor Linder. He’s a good mentor and friend,” said Matara, a certified CPA and school business administrator who also holds the title of NCC’s Director of Real Estate Development.

Even in these challenging economic times, Matara has kept NCC’s mission front and center as he has continued to operate and

expand programming giving inner-city residents the tools to improve the quality of their lives to reflect individual God-given dignity and personal achievement.

And he hasn’t forgotten the villagers back home. Matara and a group of U.S. volunteers have established a Kenyan boarding school for children in grades 5-8 they have dubbed The GRACE Project (Global Response to African Children’s Education).

“It is really through the grace of God that we are able to do this,” Matara explained.

The \$600,000 project includes a health center, community library and free tutoring for a national exam. The library and first class of fifth graders are scheduled to both be in place by September, with plans calling for a grade to be added in the three subsequent years. Matara’s other projects include an agriculture demonstration farm to help economically empower Kenyan women and a community development program based at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi.

When he is not working or involved in his mission work, one can find Matara spending quality time with his wife, Lillian, and sons, Carlton, 12, and Mitchell, 10, for whom he serves as chief soccer coach.

New Community is truly blessed to have a man with Joseph Matara’s leadership abilities and compassion serving as its COO.

OUR MISSION

To help residents of inner cities improve the quality of their lives to reflect individual, God-given dignity and personal achievement.